

CITY

Neighbors Mourn Girl Who 'Never Had a Chance'

By CRAIG WOLFF

On the Harlem street where Ebony Williams lived, the summer stirs in the usual ways. The youngest children play on the sidewalk or cling to their mothers on the front stoops, and everyone seems to linger outside much of the time, waiting for the heat to snap. And mostly, everyone watches everyone else.

The neighbors on Ebony's block say that they noticed something "going wrong" with the child. Time and again, they saw her running in tears from her building or huddling in doorways with men probably twice her age. She was just a few weeks past her 13th birthday, and the neighbors said that it was not uncommon for her to dash home at nearly any hour of the night, or not to show up at all.

When word rippled down the street over the last few days that Ebony was dead, that her body was found two weeks ago burning beneath a highway overpass in the Bronx, the neighbors — the mothers especially — cried. They had tried to caution her about the dangers of the street, they said, but were still left with a mourner's feeling that they had not done enough.

'You Better Take Care'

"I told her, 'Baby, you better be careful, you better take care,'" said Kathleen Eaton, who lives across the street. "But she wasn't listening. Her head was someplace else."

Detectives, who arrested two suspects in her killing before they even knew her name, called Ebony a "chronic runaway." It was one way of explaining how she could have fallen victim to so gruesome a crime. They said that she might have been raped, her throat had been slashed, and her body stuffed into a cardboard box before it was set afire. Her body was so mutilated that she could only be identified through dental records.

The detectives also wondered aloud why her mother, Yvonne Hill, had not reported her missing until Aug. 31, 10 days after she was last seen, and they said that it might be a matter for the city's child protective services. The Daily News had reported that Ms. Hill had complained that the courts had rejected her petition to place her daughter in a juvenile detention program, but Ms. Hill declined to comment, as did officials with the Child Welfare Administration.

On Friday afternoon, as Ms. Hill made funeral plans for her daughter, neighbors and friends gathered outside the family's six-story apartment building at 103 West 120th Street. They described Ebony, one of six children, as the small, sweet girl whose angelic face made her look even younger than she was, but who had changed over the last few years.

Some lighted candles in front of the building and said they were frightened for their own children, who were trying to grow up straight amid drug dealing and other neighborhood crime. They pointed to abandoned buildings and broken windows on a



Ruby Washington/The New York Times

On the street where Ebony Williams lived, Romen Kelly, left, and Ada Morton lit candles on Friday for the 13-year-old whose body was found two weeks ago burning beneath a highway overpass in the Bronx.

'She was just like my kids,' a mother says. 'That's what's so scary.'

street that had a boarded-up, crashed-out, falling-down look. Others said the problems that made Ebony repeatedly run away began in her home.

"It was the saddest thing you ever saw," said Thomela Folks, who lives across the hall from the family's apartment. "She didn't have clothes to wear. She used to cry that she had to wear her brother's clothes. And you'd hear fighting."

A Child Who Changed

Her former Sunday school teacher, Maria Eftimiades, who said she had taken a special interest in Ebony and her younger brother Harvey, said that Ebony began to change when she was around 9.

"She was just another child, loving and innocent and scared of her shadow, and then something changed."

Ms. Eftimiades, now a journalist, said she had met Ebony and her family when they were living in a welfare hotel on 27th Street and she was doing volunteer work with All Souls Unitarian Church.

She recalled that Ebony had played a sheep in the Nativity scene in a Christmas play and that she liked to travel out of the city, to a farm or even to a car wash in New Jersey. Ms.



Ebony Williams and her brother Harvey in a family photograph.

Eftimiades said that Ebony often sought refuge from what the child described as frequent turmoil at home.

"Really, this kid never had a chance," Ms. Eftimiades said. "She never slept on a bed with sheets, always on a mattress. And she was fed Kool-Aid."

On Friday afternoon, after word of Ebony's death had sifted through the block, the mothers shook their heads

and vowed that they would keep closer rein on their own children. A young man sat nearby on a folding chair, openly selling drugs to customers who drove up to the curb.

"Ebony was really an average kid," said Ada Morton, a mother of two small children, who lives across the street. "I'll remember her running up and down the street, playing when she was young. She was just like my kids. That's what's so scary."

Bodies of an Artist's Work Are Parked On Park Ave.

By RANDY KENNEDY

The orange trucks that rolled down Park Avenue at 10:30 A.M. yesterday looked no different from the many moving vans that invade Manhattan on most weekends, installing new residents or carting others out.

But when workers pulled the blankets from their unlikely cargo — 14 massive bronze sculptures in the shape of a horse, a cat, a bird and an assortment of abominous humans — doormen at the stately apartment buildings that line the street suddenly edged out into the drizzle.

Tourists dodged cars to get a picture as the monumental figures, created by Fernando Botero, were lowered onto white pedestals in the median of Park Avenue.

And many people who live nearby said they went back home to get umbrellas so they could watch as the middle of the avenue, between 54th and 61st Streets, was transformed in a matter of hours into a museum of sorts.

"It's amazing," said Cathy Paul, who had stopped to marvel on the north side of 59th Street, where one of the sculptures, "The Rape of Europa," 13 feet tall and 2,900 pounds, had just been fastened to its pedestal. "You go to sleep one night and wake up the next morning to find a Botero on your corner. This is great."

But not all of the neighborhood's residents have agreed on the merits of the installation, which is to remain through Nov. 14.

The sculptures were brought to Park Avenue by the Public Art Fund, a nonprofit group that installs art works around the city, over the objections of one of the neighborhood's community boards and members of the Park Avenue Malls Planting Project, a private group that cares for the flowers and shrubs on two miles of the median.

Margaret Ternes, the executive director of the planting project, sought an alternate site for the sculptures, saying she thought they would set a precedent for other artists to ask to use the area.

The planting project members said they were also worried about traffic accidents involving pedestrians lured to the median by the sculptures.

"The mere thought of this sort of activity on the malls makes the committee shudder at the thought of possible outcomes of it," Ms. Ternes wrote in a letter to the Parks and Recreation Department.

But department officials said they granted permits for the sculpture because of the unique opportunity to show Mr. Botero's works, some of which have been displayed in Florence and Monte Carlo, and on the

Champs-Élysées in Paris, where they were received with great enthusiasm last October.

"We have made it clear that we do not plan to regularly program the Park Avenue mall with these types of art projects," said Stewart Desmond, a Parks Department spokesman.

The city, he said, had agreed to protect the Park Avenue Malls Planting Project against any legal liability if a traffic accident were caused by the sculptures. Ms. Ternes and several other members of the planting project could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Mark Condon, a doorman at the Ritz Tower Hotel at 57th Street and Park, said he had worried that he

'You go to sleep one night and wake up the next morning to find a Botero.'

would get an earful about the sculptures from his building's residents. "But I think they like them now that they're up," said Mr. Condon, a second-year student at Trinity College in Dublin, who is spending his summer in New York. "I think they look pretty good myself."

An elevator operator at 521 Park Avenue was a bit more reserved. "Well, that one over there, you can't beat that for weird," he said, pointing to "Torso (Woman)," a 2,900-pound sculpture of a woman's ballooned body. "But over all, I like it. It's something different to look at, you know?"

Mr. Botero, who stood under an umbrella as one of the works was lowered to the ground, said he could not be happier. "They look great, what can I say?" he said. "They don't look foreign to this area at all, I think. I'm glad we finally did it."

When asked about the opposition to the exhibit, he said simply, "Well, this is not Paris, I guess."

WELL?

The Health page
Every Wednesday
The New York Times

Alitalia's U.S. Operation Is Target of Strike

By The Associated Press

Ticket agents and cargo handlers struck Alitalia's United States operations yesterday after a two-year mediation effort between the airline and the machinists union failed to produce a contract, airline and union officials said.

Gianfranco Bianchi, personnel manager for the company, said supervisors were filling in for the striking union members and service would not be affected. Pickets at Kennedy International Airport were not affecting the airline's operations, he said.

The two sides have been negotiating since 1990 and their dispute has been before the National Mediation Board since 1991, Mr. Bianchi said.

Joe Adinolfi, general chairman of District 142 of the Machinists, including 208 Alitalia workers in New York City, said the company demanded that workers accept either a 40 percent pay cut or a package of concessions including a "management rights" clause allowing the airline to contract out work performed by union members.

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